

birth receives a guardian angel, the soul of the deceased after leaving this world starts first to visit all the people and places where it has been when on this earth. This journey, no matter how great the distance may be, must be completed in forty days. If the departed has lived most of his time in his village, and only occasionally has gone to neighboring towns or villages, the journey will be an easy and pleasant one, but if he has traveled great distances the journey will be tiring and rough. It may be that this belief has been responsible for keeping the peasants so firmly attached to their land and village, and preventing them from migrating to new lands. . . .

"The soul has started on its journey, while the body is still in the house, being mourned by the family and the neighbors. The members of the family throw grains of corn or wheat into the coffin. They also believe that there is a great river to be passed and if the deceased has no money he will be unable to cross, and his journey will be impeded. Another peculiar belief is that the neighbors send through him messages to their departed, firmly believing that he will deliver them."

Investigation showed that these statements held true generally of Dragalevtsy but needed to be supplemented. For one thing, the villagers had definite ways of foretelling death. They said, for instance, that there were as many stars in the sky as there were people on earth, and that there was a particular star for each person. When a star fell to the ground, someone was said to have died and his star to have gone out like his soul. If the star merely moved from one place to another, then its particular earthly representative had changed his residence. Many peasants also believed that "stars with tails" (meteors) foretold some great misfortune to be sent by God. Usually they were thought to signify war "because before the Balkan War and the World War there were such." But there were even more specific ways of predicting death in any given locality. When the owls cried at sunset toward a house or when a hen crowed, death was sure to follow soon. Certain dreams indicated the coming of death. Bai Angel, the village registrar, told me that a soldier could be practically certain of death if he dreamed of a snake. He supported this belief with the story of an officer in the first World War who lined up his men before a battle and went down the ranks to shake hands with

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- 763 the soldiers and told them that he would not return from the fight. He
787 was sure of this because he had dreamed of a snake during the night. Sure enough, he was killed in the action that followed.

If a person dreamed of a wedding or that he was leading a *boro*, death was probable; or if he dreamed of having a tooth pulled, the same held true. If he dreamed that he saw a deep black hole (similar to a grave), someone connected with him would die; if it was white inside, somebody else would die; if he fell into the hole, he would die.

- 764 In Dragalevtsy there were certain old women who considered themselves specialists in the preparation of the body for burial. They were "priestesses of superstition" who saw to it that all the pagan rites were carried out before the priest arrived to conduct the funeral. Their presence at any crisis showed the duality of the peasants' view of the universe.

- 771 God was thought to be the force symbolizing the Good. The
793 priest was His representative and should be given due respect; furthermore, he should be asked to perform all of the customary ceremonies such as the sprinkling of holy water in every room of the house at Bogoyavlenie or Epiphany on the nineteenth of January. Keeping on the good side of the priest meant keeping on the good side of God, whose favors one needs both in this life and the next.

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754 Inasmuch as they believed in a principle of Good at work in the universe, it was logical for the peasants to believe in a principle of Evil which could do them harm, with or without the consent of the Good. Some parts of the church ceremonies, such as spitting over the child at the devil during the christening, were directed at nullifying the efforts of the Evil One. Seeing that the church concerned itself chiefly with the Good, the peasant in his naivete felt compelled to do something to ward off the Evil, and thus perpetuated many primitive customs which startle both educated Bulgarians and those westerners who are not familiar with the equally primitive customs found within certain areas of their own supposedly civilized lands.

- 754 The intermediaries in this "cult of the Evil Eye, Devil, Bad Luck"
789 were certain old women, called *babi*, already described in the account of a village birth.¹ These women showed people how to keep the Evil Eye away. They advised mothers whose babies were only one

¹ [See pp. 30-31, Category 116-- Analyst]